

REMOVING BLIGHT FROM SMALL TOWN MAIN STREET

EPA REGION 10 BROWNFIELDS ASSISTANCE

AK, ID, OR, WA



EPA 910-F-05-003



RURAL



Fast Facts:

Region 10 includes Alaska, Washington, Idaho, and Oregon.

Brownfield: (broun'feld) n. Real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.

Why Cleanup Brownfields?

- It is estimated that there are more than 450,000 brownfields in the U.S. Cleaning up and reinvesting in these properties:

- increases local tax bases
- facilitates job growth
- utilizes existing infrastructure
- takes development pressures off of undeveloped, open land
- improves and protects the environment

Contact us:

Visit our website at
<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields>, or
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Contaminated sites often keep small towns in economic distress—one bad site can depreciate property values and stifle development for the entire town. The EPA Brownfields Program was founded on the belief that cleaning up properties for reuse invigorates local economies, preserves green space, and prevents sprawl. EPA staff in Region 10 work with federal, state, tribal, public, and private partners to help local decision-makers restore land for a variety of uses. Project leaders find that assistance from the EPA Brownfields program can provide many benefits, including providing **technical assistance** for assessment and cleanup, **building organizational capacity**, and freeing up land for **beneficial reuse**.

Providing Technical Assistance— Prineville, Oregon

Many communities may not have experience with redeveloping a contaminated site, and EPA staff can provide expert technical assistance to help guide grantees through the complex process of environmental assessment and cleanup. In Prineville, Oregon, a technical planning team helped cleanup an old gas station that had contaminated a prime piece of land right in the downtown core. Vapors



Cleanup in Prineville, Oregon



*Abandoned dry cleaner site,
Weiser, Idaho*

were so strong from contamination that they started migrating into nearby businesses, and 15% of the city's commercial buildings stood vacant.

- Staff from the Underground Storage Tanks division of the Brownfields program helped lead the way, streamlining the environmental monitoring process and bringing partners together from the city and the county.
- EPA helped accelerate the process by working with stakeholders to move the site through the assessment and clean up phases.
- The cleanup enabled the community to build a new city hall on the site, and as a result, the city has been able to attract other grants to rebuild their civic buildings.
- Since Prineville is an economically distressed area, this cleanup launched a larger revitalization plan that encouraged other real estate investments and breathed new life into the city's economy.

Capacity Building—Weiser, Idaho

How does a tiny town in Idaho assess contamination levels faster than most big city grantees? With

assistance from the EPA Brownfields program, town leaders took action to assess an abandoned dry cleaner site that they believed was emitting toxic contaminants and driving away commercial development. Rural communities with limited resources often find that their Brownfields grant can help boost their organizational capacity.

- Staff from the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality encouraged the county to pursue EPA assistance, and assisted in preliminary meetings.
- The county was able to secure an additional consultant to manage the grant from a local economic development organization.
- EPA staff also connected the county with the US Army Corp of Engineers, who helped guide them through the process of selecting a qualified environmental contractor.
- Because of this cooperation between partners, they have been able to move quickly to assess the site.

Beneficial Reuse—Fairbanks, Alaska

A key criterion for any brownfield is that it has potential for redevelopment. Community leaders wanted to turn a solid waste recycling center into a site for business development, but lacked the resources to conduct an environmental assessment. As a publicly owned property with no tax revenue, the site was a tax burden on a community that was already economically distressed. The site was also located next to a mobile home park where many children were living, presenting significant health risks for the community.

- Local officials saw potential in the site and were convinced that a credible environmental assessment

would assuage the concerns of potential buyers.

- An EPA Brownfields assessment grant enabled the community to hire a contractor to complete the assessment and design an action plan for cleanup. EPA staff helped forge a partnership with the Army Corp of Engineers to provide technical assistance and scoping priorities.
- The site assessment provided by the grant led to a prospective purchaser agreement drafted by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, which allows prospective buyers to know their risks before purchasing the property.
- The borough is moving forward with cleanup, and will soon increase their tax base when the property is auctioned at a tax foreclosure sale.

Supporting Public Involvement—Rosalia, Washington

A former gas station plagued with petroleum contamination was located in the middle of Rosalia's business district, hindering development of the downtown commercial core. City officials acquired the abandoned property so it would be publicly owned and eligible for EPA Brownfields assistance.

- City leaders kept the public informed of project progress. They also started a fundraising campaign to build the future Visitors Center by encouraging donations on their website and promoting a custom license plate.
- The visitors center is complete, and there are plans to house a farmer's market for local businesses to display and sell goods.
- The center recently hosted a motorcycle show to draw new visitors to the downtown area.



New visitors center in Rosalia, Washington

Grant Funding:

Brownfields grants serve as the foundation of EPA's Brownfields Program. There are four types of competitive grants: assessment grants, cleanup grants, cleanup revolving loan fund grants, and job training grants. In addition to direct Brownfields funding, EPA also provides a variety of assistance. This could include an initial environment assessment of the property, assistance with community involvement, and help with cleanup and redevelopment planning. Past recipients of Brownfields funding include tribes, non-profit organizations, local governments, development agencies, states and coalitions.

For competitive grants, applicants are encouraged to review the guidelines and to participate in one of the grant training opportunities that are held region-wide in the fall. Applications are generally due in November each year.